The Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing one of the world’s most complex and protracted crises. More than 15 million children bear the brunt of an escalation in armed conflict and recurrent disease outbreaks. These exacerbate chronic poverty, systemic weaknesses and existing population vulnerability. Increased military operations are expected in 2023, alongside rising tensions in the run-up to general elections scheduled for December 2023.

UNICEF is adopting a needs-based approach to respond to a multifaceted and intensifying humanitarian crisis, aiming to ensure that 75 per cent of children in need are assisted.

To provide a holistic humanitarian response, UNICEF will continue to offer integrated, life-saving assistance while at the same time enhancing community resilience and social cohesion, to pave the way for longer-term interventions. A systematic approach to scaling up the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence prevention and response will be integrated within all programmatic interventions.

UNICEF requires US$862.4 million to address the acute needs of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2023. Timely, flexible and multi-year funding are essential in supporting UNICEF to reach the most vulnerable, crisis-affected children.

Key planned targets:

- **995,800** children with severe wasting admitted for treatment
- **1.7 million** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- **2 million** children/caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support
- **3.4 million** people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water

In need:

- **26.4 million** people
- **15.4 million** children

To be reached:

- **11.4 million** people
- **8.1 million** children

Funding requirements:

- **US$ 862.4 million**
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to one of the world’s most complex and protracted crises: around 26.4 million people, including 15.4 million children, are bearing the brunt of an escalation in armed conflict and recurrent disease outbreaks that are exacerbating chronic poverty, systemic weaknesses and vulnerability. The scale of humanitarian needs and protection concerns remains massive.

In 2022, the country hosts the second-highest number of internally displaced people in the world. Population displacement continues to rise, with more than 1.29 million people displaced between January and July 2022. At least 97 per cent of displaced people live in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces, which have seen a growing number of targeted attacks against civilians and infrastructure, including sites for internally displaced people, schools and health facilities.

Protection concerns remain paramount. More than 2,500 grave violations against children were verified as of September 2022. Recruitment or use of children in armed forces and armed groups is increasing, as is killing and maiming of children, which increased by 10 percent in 2022 compared with 2021. Humanitarian access is constrained, and the presence of partners is diminishing in some areas due to insecurity and operational restrictions. With the deployment of the East African Community Joint Regional Force in the eastern part of the country, increased military operations are expected in 2023, alongside mounting tensions in the run-up to general elections scheduled for December 2023.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to face epidemic outbreaks in 2022. As of November, the country had experienced two new Ebola outbreaks, and the measles situation remained critical, with the number of suspect cases reaching more than 122,414 (with 1,444 deaths reported) - vastly exceeding reported measles cases in 2021. The country has one of the highest risks of cross-border spillover spread of the current Ebola outbreak in Uganda, which requires urgent anticipatory action in three provinces. The number of suspected cholera cases also increased by 206 per cent compared with the same period in 2021, with 12,797 suspected cholera cases and 243 deaths reported. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a major impact on all primary health services, including the availability of essential care and routine immunization.

The nutrition situation remains critical. As of September 2022, 17 per cent of health zones were on nutritional alert and the number of emergency alerts had increased by 84 per cent compared with the same period in 2021. To reduce malnutrition in the long-term, UNICEF’s response aims to increase the proportion of infants aged 0-5 months who are exclusively breastfed to 61 per cent and the proportion of children aged 6-23 months who are receiving the minimum dietary diversity to 25 per cent (by 2025).

Throughout the country, more than 1.3 million children under age 5 require treatment for severe wasting; 3.9 million women/children need emergency protection services; 6.6 million children require emergency water and sanitation; and 2.7 million children require emergency education support.

STORY FROM THE FIELD

Tens of thousands of children are in hiding in North Kivu Province. Many of them are unaccompanied or have been separated from their parents.

Passing through the doors of Rutshuru day centre, the joyful mix of children’s cries and laughter rises up to contrast with the gloomy atmosphere that reigns in the province.

At the day centre, recreational activities are followed during quieter times, when children can weave baskets or learn new skills. It is during one of these workshops that Meschack shares his story. The 13-year-old boy was separated from his parents on the Congolese Independence Day.

Read more about this story here

Thirteen-year-old Meshack (left) weaves a basket at the UNICEF-supported UPDECO centre in Rutshuru, after becoming separated from his family.
HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

In 2023, UNICEF will remain among the first responders delivering a needs-based, timely and integrated life-saving response to reach vulnerable children. A gender approach will be systematically integrated throughout the response. Aiming to enable holistic humanitarian assistance, UNICEF will provide immediate access to essential services while enhancing community resilience and paving the way for longer-term interventions using a nexus approach. Localization through community engagement and the empowerment of local actors will remain the backbone of UNICEF’s strategy. Such a strategy allows for improved effectiveness, greater acceptance and enhanced access to hard-to-reach areas, while increasing overall efficiency and value for money.

At the onset of crises, UNICEF and partners will deliver rapid response to save lives and mitigate the immediate impact. UNICEF’s localized Rapid Response Mechanism (called UniRR) will focus on population movements and natural hazards, while the rapid response to cholera focused on suspected cases will help to stop the transmission of that disease. UNICEF will continue strengthening the linkages between health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), education and child protection and gender-based violence programming. This will enable more integrated humanitarian assistance and increase children’s access to quality and inclusive assistance in a protective and child-friendly environment. When appropriate, UNICEF will strengthen the use of humanitarian cash transfers to address urgent needs through multipurpose transfers or to meet sectoral outputs.

To support responses to public health emergencies, UNICEF, with the Government and partners, will contribute to the coordination and response of several outbreak response pillars. Specific community needs will also be addressed, including through support to the continuity of essential social services for children, adolescents and women.

Children associated with armed groups and unaccompanied or separated children will receive appropriate and individualized care, focusing on innovative reintegration programmes. To save the lives of children, health, nutrition and WASH efforts will focus on improving access to basic WASH services, primary health care and immunization. They will also support early detection of severe wasting and subsequent referrals and treatment in the community and in health facilities. Preventive interventions - such as infant and young child feeding counselling - will be reinforced in 2023.

For UNICEF, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse is a top priority, along with prevention of gender-based violence. The organization will continue to enforce a holistic and systematic approach to scaling up related prevention measures within all its interventions through its gender, gender-based violence and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse mechanism.

Finally, UNICEF will continue to lead the WASH, Nutrition and Education Clusters, the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the working group coordinating distribution of essential household items. UNICEF also co-leads the United Nations Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict.

2023 PROGRAMME TARGETS

Health
- 1,095,890 children vaccinated against measles
- 618,400 children and women accessing primary healthcare in UNICEF-supported facilities

Nutrition
- 995,800 children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment
- 1,886,900 primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling
- 58,000 children 6-59 months receiving micronutrient powder

Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA
- 2,009,600 children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support
- 397,800 women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- 600,000 people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations
- 7,250 children who have exited an armed force and groups provided with protection or reintegration support
- 10,200 unaccompanied and separated children provided with alternative care and/or reunified

Education
- 1,726,400 children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- 1,035,900 children receiving individual learning materials

Water, sanitation and hygiene
- 3,384,000 people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs
- 3,977,600 people accessing appropriate sanitation services

Social protection
- 100,000 households reached with UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers

Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)
- 115,000 households reached with UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers across sectors
- 300,000 people who participate in engagement actions

Rapid response mechanism
- 1,080,000 people whose life-saving non-food items needs are met through supply or cash distributions within seven days of needs assessments
- 693,000 people targeted around suspected cholera cases received an appropriate and complete response within 48 hours of case notification through a responsive epidemiological surveillance system

Progress against the latest programme targets is available in the humanitarian situation reports: [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/drc/situation-reports](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/drc/situation-reports)

This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action. UNICEF increased its targets in the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan to ensure that our response plans, along with cluster partners, cover 75 per cent of the cluster-specific needs in need.
UNICEF requests US$862.4 million to meet the critical humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and contribute to the realization of children’s rights in 2023. The 142 percent budget increase compared with the 2022 appeal reflects the humanitarian needs and rights-based approach that will be adopted by UNICEF in the the country in 2023, in view of the sharp increase of humanitarian needs: UNICEF is ensuring that 75 per cent of the people in need in the sectors led by UNICEF are assisted.

The budget is also impacted by rising operating costs and global inflation triggered by the war in Ukraine. These funds will allow UNICEF to provide life-saving services in the most vulnerable areas, promote integrated humanitarian interventions and use a community-based approach to provide more timely, effective and efficient support to more than 8.1 million children and their families. Without timely and adequate funding, children’s multiple needs will continue to go unmet. More than 1.1 million children under 5 years of age will not be vaccinated against measles and 995,000 will not have access to treatment for severe wasting; 3.4 million people will not have access to safe water; 1.1 million will not benefit from a rapid response to address their most immediate needs; 2 million children and caregivers will be deprived of mental health and psychosocial support; and 1.7 million children will not have access to education.

Flexible resources remain essential to mounting a swift and efficient response. They are critical to alleviating the suffering of Congolese children and to upholding and promoting their rights.

**Sector** | **2023 requirements (US$)**
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Health | 59,331,600
Nutrition | 330,946,100
Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA | 53,711,600
Education | 174,633,400
Water, sanitation and hygiene | 76,392,200
Social protection | 41,600,000
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP) | 56,241,400
Rapid response mechanism | 65,792,600
Cluster coordination | 3,750,000
Total | 862,398,900

*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions: Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP) (6.5%), Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA (6.2%), Social protection (4.8%), Cluster coordination (<1%).

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UNICEF has increased its target in the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan compared to the previous year, to ensure that the response plans, along with those of other cluster partners, will cover 75 per cent of the cluster-specific needs in each sector.

In 2019 and 2020, UNICEF undertook a Humanitarian Review seeking to strengthen the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response through its leadership or co-leadership of cluster coordination for the WASH, Nutrition and Education Clusters and the Child Protection Cluster. UNICEF is committed to supporting the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response through its leadership or co-leadership of cluster coordination for the WASH, Nutrition and Education Clusters and the Child Protection Cluster.

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In 2023, UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The revised Core Commitments made investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations.

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